the 17th century. Our obligation to the future demands that we take our place at the forefront of these transformations. We must organize ourselves in ways that enable us fully to engage in such exploration, as we have begun to do by creating the Broad Institute, by founding cross-school departments, by launching a School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. We must overcome barriers both within and beyond Harvard that could slow or constrain such work, and we must provide the resources and the facilities—like the new science buildings in both Cambridge and Allston—to support it. Our obligation to the future makes additional demands. Universities are, uniquely, a place of philosophers as well as scientists. It is urgent that we pose the questions of ethics and meaning that will enable us to confront the human, the social and the moral significance of our changing relationship with the natural world.

Accountability to the future requires that we leap geographic as well as intellectual boundaries. Just as we live in a time of narrowing distances between fields and disciplines, so we inhabit an increasingly transnational world in which knowledge itself is the most powerful connector. Our lives here in Cambridge and Boston cannot be separated from the future of the rest of the earth: we share the same changing climate; we contract and spread the same diseases; we participate in the same economy. We must recognize our accountability to the wider world, for, as John Winthrop warned in 1630, ''we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.''

HARVARD AS A SOURCE AND SYMBOL

Harvard is both a source and a symbol of the ever expanding knowledge upon which the future of the earth depends, and we must take an active and reflective role in this new geography of learning. Higher education is burgeoning around the globe in forms that are at once like and unlike our own. American universities are widely emulated, but our imitators often display limited appreciation for the principles of free inquiry and the culture of creative unruliness that defines us.

The ''Veritas'' in Harvard's shield was originally intended to invoke the absolutes of divine revelation, the unassailable verities of Puritan religion. We understand it quite differently now. Truth is an aspiration, not a possession. Yet in this we—and all universities defined by the spirit of debate and free inquiry—challenge and even threaten those who would embrace unquestioned certainties. We must commit ourselves to the uncomfortable position of doubt, to the humility of always believing there is more to know, more to teach, more to understand.

The kinds of accountability I have described represent at once a privilege and a responsibility. We are able to live at Harvard in a world of intellectual freedom, of inspiring tradition, of extraordinary resources, because we are part of that curious and venerable organization known as a university. We need better to comprehend and advance its purposes—not simply to explain ourselves to an often critical public, but to hold ourselves to our own account. We must act not just as students and staff, historians and computer scientists, lawyers and physicians, linguists and sociologists, but as citizens of the university, with obligations to this commonwealth of the mind. We must regard ourselves as accountable to one another, for we constitute the institution that in turn defines our possibilities. Accountability to the future encompasses special accountability to our students, for they are our most important purpose and legacy. And we are responsible not just to and for this university, Harvard, in this moment, 2007, but to the very concept of the university as it has evolved over nearly a millennium.

It is not easy to convince a nation or a world to respect, much less support, institutions committed to challenging society's fundamental assumptions. But it is our obligation to make that case: both to explain our purposes and achieve them so well that these precious institutions survive and prosper in this new century. Harvard cannot do this alone. But all of us know that Harvard has a special role. That is why we are here; that is why it means so much to us.

Last week I was given a brown manila envelope that had been entrusted to the University Archives in 1951 by James B. Conant, Harvard's 23rd president. He left instructions that it should be opened by the Harvard president at the outset of the next century ''and not before.'' I broke the seal on the mysterious package to find a remarkable letter from my predecessor. It was addressed to ''My dear Sir.'' Conant wrote with a sense of imminent danger. He feared an impending World War III that would make ''the destruction of our cities including Cambridge quite possible.'' ''We all wonder,'' he continued, ''how the free world is going to get through the next fifty years.''

HARVARD'S FUTURE

But as he imagined Harvard's future, Conant shifted from foreboding to faith. If the ''prophets of doom'' proved wrong, if there was a Harvard president alive to read his letter, Conant was confident about what the university would be. ''You will receive this note and be in charge of a more prosperous and significant institution than the one over which I have the honor to preside . . . That . . . [Harvard] will maintain the traditions of academic freedom, of tolerance for heresy, I feel sure.'' We must dedicate ourselves to making certain he continues to be right; we must share and sustain his faith.

Conant's letter, like our gathering here, marks a dramatic intersection of the past with the future. This is a ceremony in which I pledge—with keys and seal and charter—my accountability to the traditions that his voice from the past invokes. And at the same time, I affirm, in compact with all of you, my accountability to and for Harvard's future. As in Conant's day, we face uncertainties in a world that gives us sound reason for disquiet. But we too maintain an unwavering belief in the purposes and potential of this university and in all it can do to shape how the world will look another half century from now. Let us embrace those responsibilities and possibilities; let us share them ''knitt together . . . as one;'' let us take up the work joyfully, for such an assignment is a privilege beyond measure.

LOSS OF SOUTH CAROLINA STUDENTS

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, as we are confronted by the deep sadness of this tragic loss, may we never lose sight of the life, vitality, and youth that was suddenly taken from us on October 27, 2007, in Ocean Isle, NC. Today and in the difficult days to come, we offer our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of these seven young men and women. The University of South Carolina, Clemson University, and the State of South Carolina feel the immeasurable pain of losing seven of our most precious sons and daughters, and as the family South Carolinians are, we share in your grief and offer our love and support.

Not only do we mourn the loss of sons and daughters, but we mourn the loss of future leaders and scholars, peacemakers and trailblazers, parents and friends. The world was vastly open to these young men and women. I ask others to find the courage and resolve to fulfill their suspended hopes and dreams, ensuring that futures overcome flames and aspirations prevail over ashes.

Though it is grief that connects us now, let it be the spirit of their lives that forever bonds our community. We should honor these students by taking up the load they left for us to carry and seeing their earthly aspirations through to their full fruition.

XV PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it is with great pride that I join all of Connecticut in extending congratulations to the many young athletes who competed in the 15th Pan American Games, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. For over half a century, these games have brought together athletes from across the Western Hemisphere. This year 5,648 athletes from 49 countries came together in Rio to compete in 38 sports.

The Pan American games, similar to the Olympics, provide us another valuable opportunity to enjoy international athletic competition undertaken for pride and the love of the sport. By participating in the 15th Pan American Games, these young Americans have had an opportunity that few of their fellow Americans ever will—to join in competition with other young people from North, Central, and South America.

I would like to commend the 14 athletes from Connecticut who competed in the games: John Ball, Andrew Bolton, Eliza Cleveland, Reilley Dampeer, Robert Merrick, Alyssa Naeher, Todd Paul, Cara Raether, Geoffrey Rathgeber, Sarah Trowbridge, Karen Scavotto, Cameron Winklevoss, Tyler Winklevoss, Bartosz Wolski. It is with great pleasure and pride that I offer further congratulations to the Connecticut athletes who brought home three gold and five silver medals and one bronze medal. Without a doubt, the nine medals won by Connecticut's athletes contributed to America's overall victory at the 15th Pan American Games. It is my hope that these kinds of events will further unite our hemisphere.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL OF THE WAILUKU COURTHOUSE

● Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, this month, the county of Maui celebrated the centennial anniversary of the historic Wailuku Courthouse. Built in 1907, the Wailuku Courthouse served as